FOR THE DECADE BETWEEN 1997 AND 2007, YOU DIDN'T GO TO WORK FOR 3D REALMS because you were going to make the most money, or because it was going to be the easiest gig. You joined them because you thought that Duke was awesome and you thought that succeeding there was going to be important and you put everything you had into that. So everyone that's ever been through those doors has left some of themselves in the game. And that's there. It's there in the game somewhere and no one can ever take that away from those people.

— RANDY PITCHFORD, President & CEO, Gearbox Software

DNF FOR ME REPRESENTS AMBITION, DETERMINATION, AND LOYALTY.

After Duke Nukem 3D, we knew we had to do something really special to top it. But perfectionism and ambition almost killed Duke. 3D Realms shouldered the full financial responsibility of making a game for a decade, and finally, we had to disband most of the company. That's when loyalty kicked in, when 10 ex-members of 3D Realms formed their own company and out of a house they spent nearly a year finishing the game— a heroic effort.

Gearbox then entered the picture to help polish the game and port it to the consoles. They also worked with the publisher to put together a retail distribution deal.

In the end, it's been a long road that finally has a happy ending, thanks to so many people who were involved, determined to see it through to the end.

Duke Nukem was born 20 years ago. And it took that long for his greatest triumph, one even meaner than the alien scum he crushes under his mighty foot. It doesn't take two seconds to know that Duke always comes out on top. Hail to the King.

— SCOTT MILLER, Co-founder of 3D Realms

DUKE-NUKEM FOREVER

HOW DID WE GET HERE TODAY?

How did Duke Nukem Forever go from a concept in 1997 to a reality that you are holding in your hands right now? How did one game go through four studios, five engines and hundreds of thousands of man hours?

In early 2011, I visited Gearbox Studios to gather assets and interview the team for this artbook. I was already worrying about how to introduce an artbook that spans over a decade of time: How do you tell a story, in two short intro pages, that encapsulates the journey this game has taken from beginning to end? During my time at Gearbox, however, Randy told me a story that serves just that purpose.

— ELIZABETH TOBEY, Editor, 2K Games

HISTORY, LEGACY & LEGEND

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

ART FROM THE VAULTS
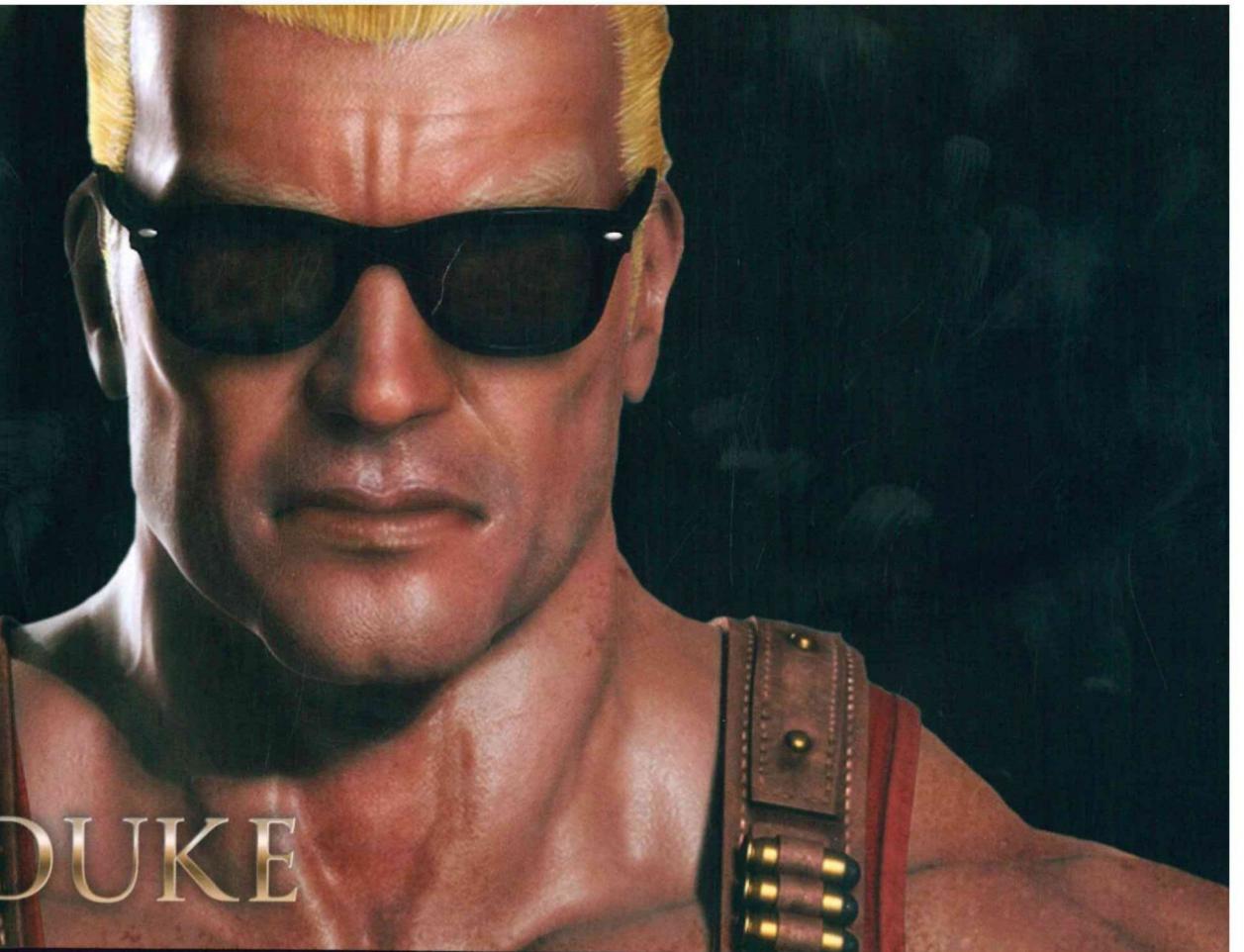
2K Games
10 Hamilton Landing
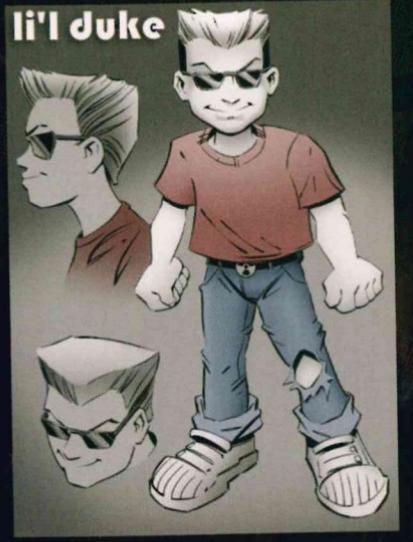Novato, CA 94949

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 : DUKE

li'l duke

At one point we pondered a cinematic with Duke and Dr. Proton in a schoolyard as kids and there being some interaction between them." — GEORGE BROUSSARD, Co-founder/Lead Designer of 3D Realms

Duke has gone from being roughly 500 triangles to 13,000 triangles in his progression from the beginning of the project to the end. — BRIAN COZZENS, Minister of Art, Gearbox

There were a lot of different versions of Duke made over the years, but I think the version Mark Skelton made in 2006 was the first time that we really felt that we had our Duke. Mark was just really good at human anatomy and making sure that Duke was the right balance of athleticism and cockiness that we wanted for the character. — DAVID RIEGEL, President, Triptych Games

THRONE
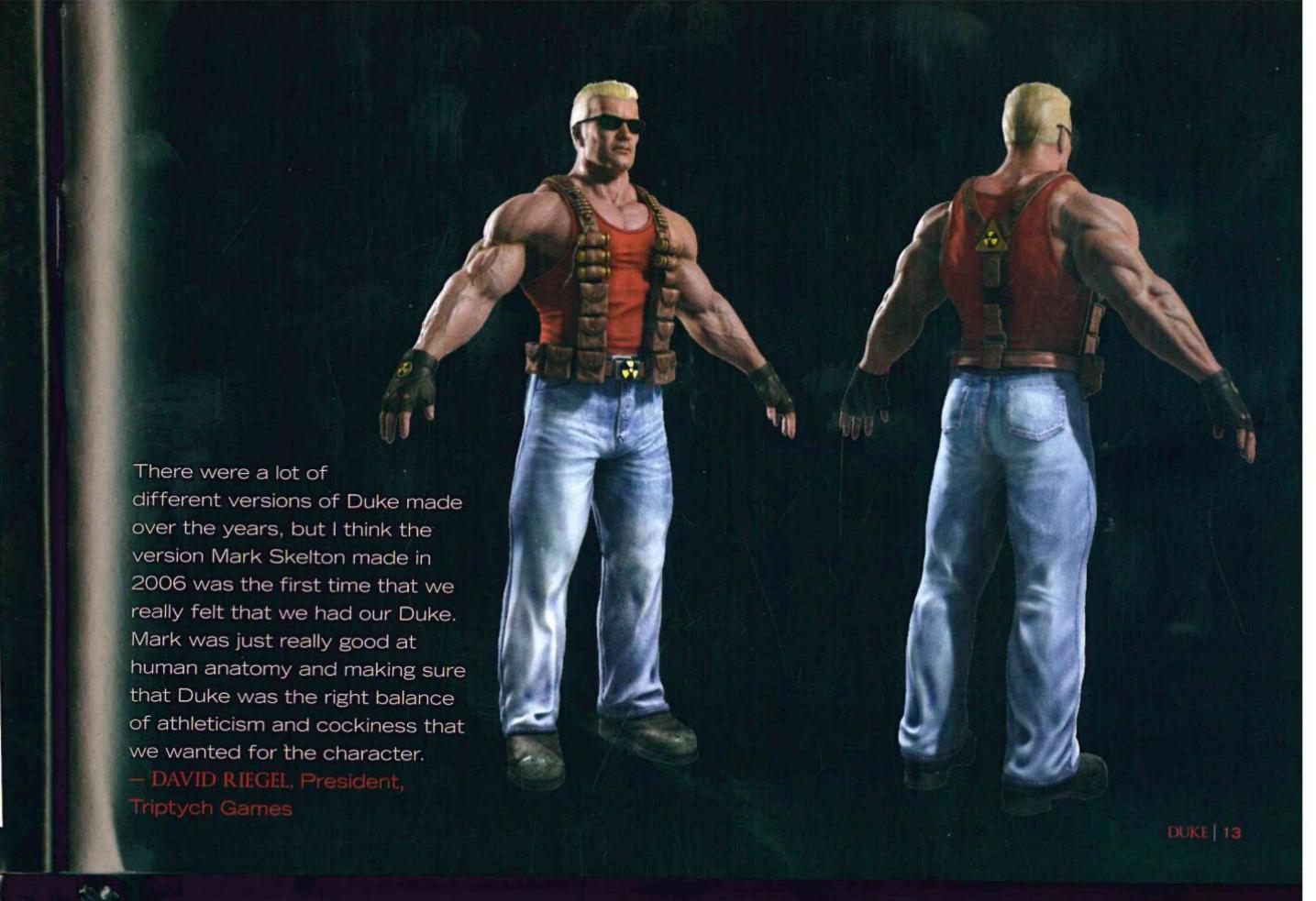
An early concept of NegaDuke before he was rendered out.

For my part, I've approached it in a few ways. First off, I own Duke, so I could do whatever I wanted. I could put him in a tutu, but I had a duty to the game: we've been waiting to play Duke Nukem Forever for all this time. We need to play the game that it's supposed to be. We need to play the game that is the vision from 3D Realms. We need to play their Duke Nukem Forever, not my Duke Nukem Forever. I'll have plenty of time to play in the space and take it in new directions if I want. But for this one, well, we certainly don't want to get in there and turn it into something it was never meant to be. And you know what? When we got it, there was so much there. It had all those core beats people want -where those guys had gotten was great. That's the thing we want to play, so let's fulfill that for as many gamers as possible.

— RANDY PITCHFORD

HAIL
TO THE KING
EVEREST

At one point we had a character that was meant to be an exact opposite of Duke—we fondly referred to him as "NegaDuke". Many of us thought NegaDuke looked much cooler than the Duke model we currently had in the game, mostly because he was more interesting with his facial hair, Matrix-like all-black motif, and more modern accessories. I seem to recall his origin being related to Dr. Proton cloning Duke's DNA and there being an army of Duke clones.
— BRIAN COZZENS

I feel with something like Duke Nukem Forever, there are a lot of obvious questions like: is the game good enough, can it live up to 12 years of hype—and how are you going to deal with pressure like that? And the real answer is you have to ignore all that. You can't think about that pressure one bit. You have to focus on one thing: shipping the game that was unshippable. — RANDY PITCHFORD
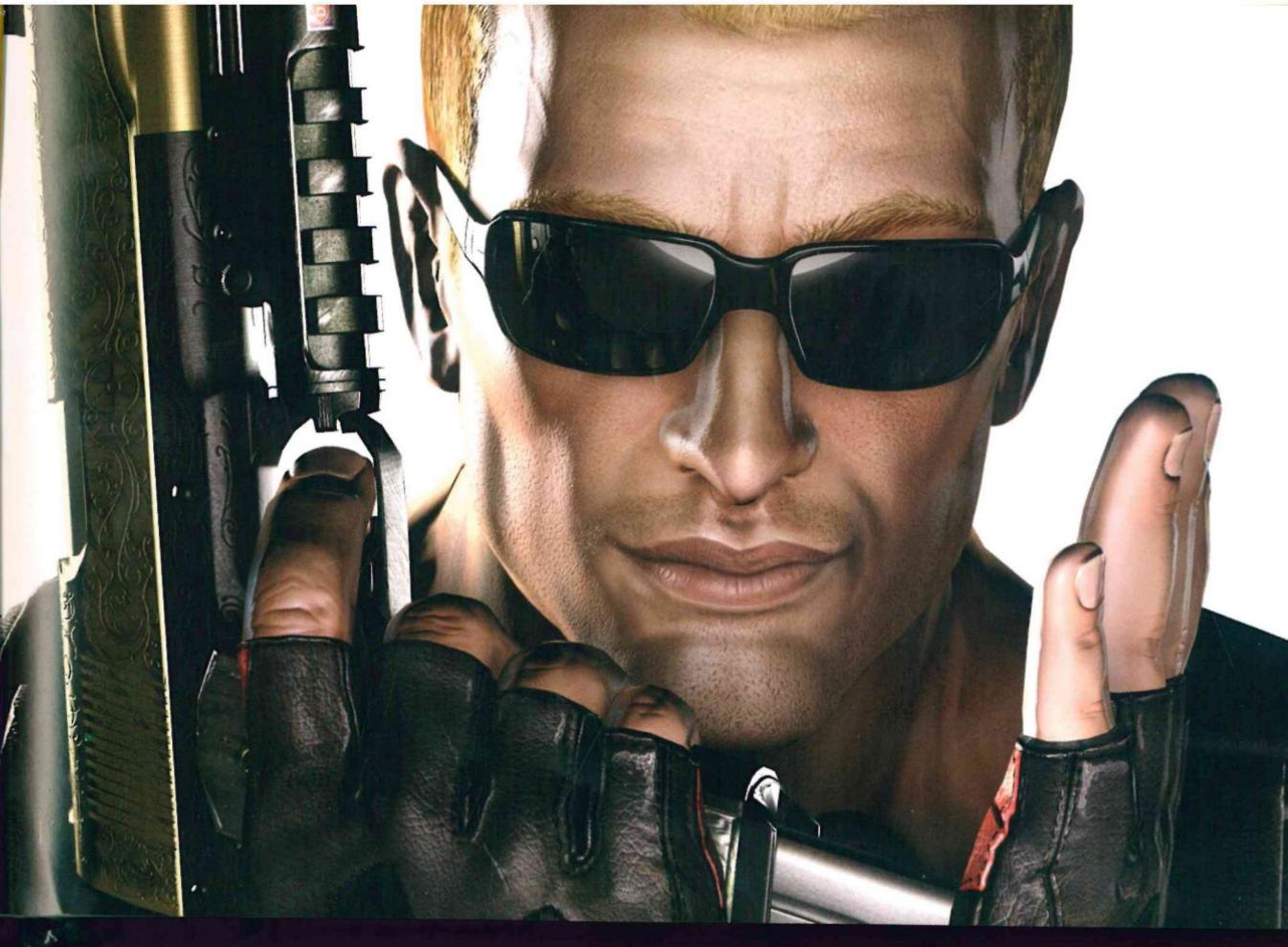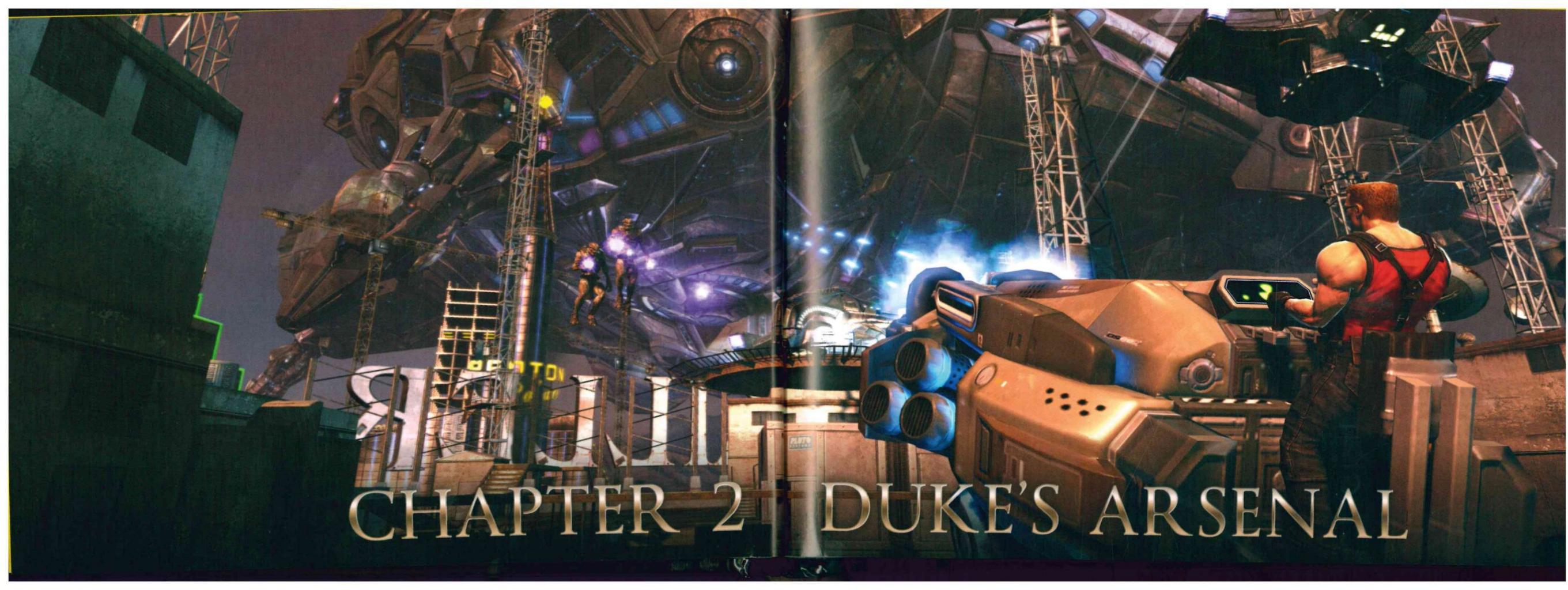
CHAPTER 2 DUKE'S ARSENAL

The idea of a short-range Freeze Ray was something we talked about back at 3D Realms; so after we formed Triptych and Gearbox got involved we wanted to see if we could make that a reality. One of the really nice things is that it allows you to execute enemies, so even though you're likely to take a lot of damage getting in close to enemies, you can gain your health back through those executions. — DAVID RIEGEL

George Broussard really wanted the pistol to fire like a real pistol, so he brought one into the office. I remember [artist] Mark Skelton playing around with that pistol in his office; he was scaring everybody with it. — CHRIS DeSIMONE, Artist, Triptych Games

This is the machine gun turret that shows up in a bunch of different levels. It's for holding off the larger hordes of aliens. When you have to deal with the mothership you use the much larger Super Turret, and for air battles the turret of choice is the grenade launcher mounted on an EDF Wasp Fighter. — NICK WILSON, FX Artist, Gearbox Software
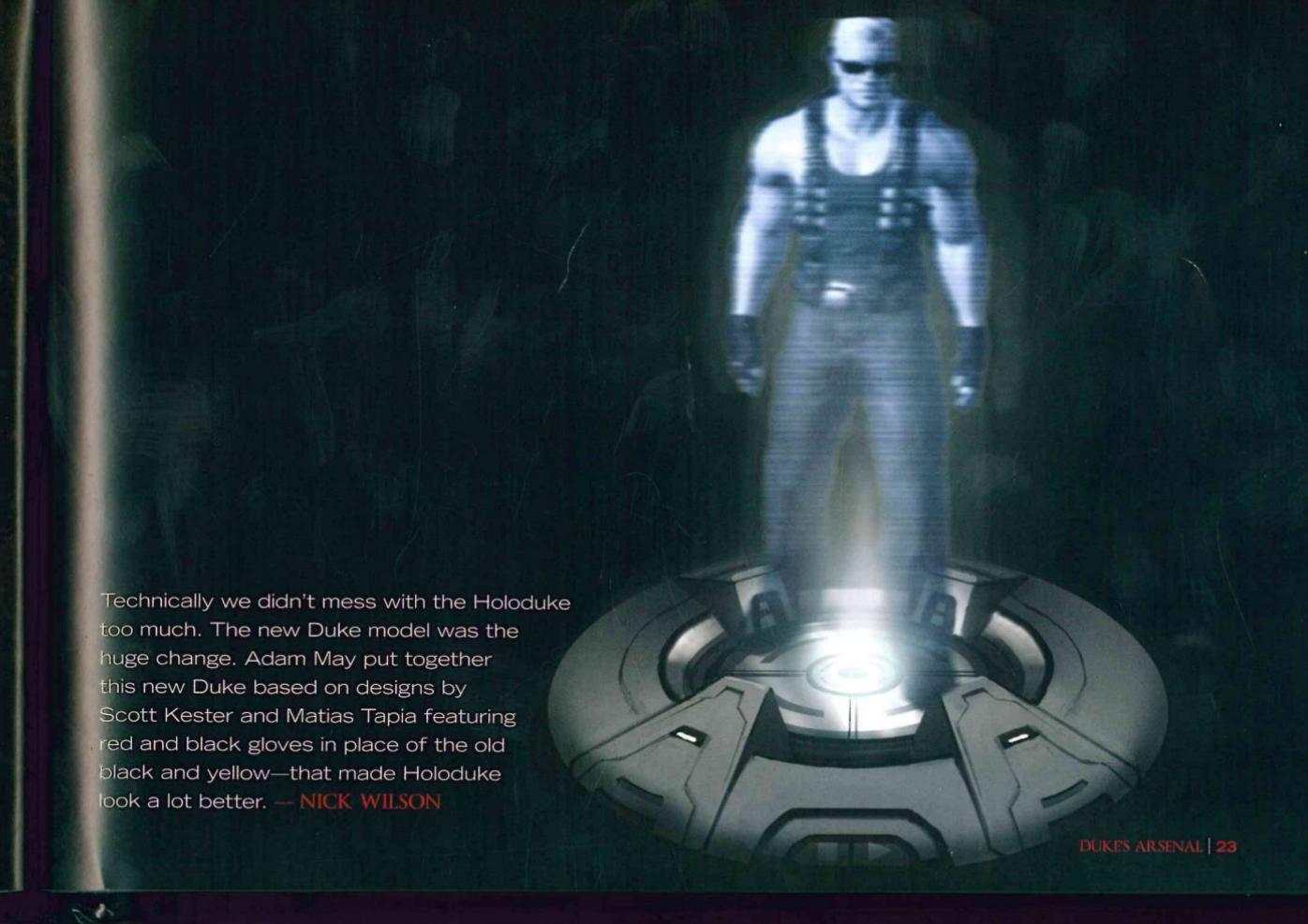
Technically we didn't mess with the Holoduke too much. The new Duke model was the huge change. Adam May put together this new Duke based on designs by Scott Kester and Matias Tapia featuring red and black gloves in place of the old black and yellow—that made Holoduke look a lot better. — NICK WILSON

The shotgun was modeled after a real weapon actually purchased at a local gun show in Mesquite, TX for about $300 (cash and carry, baby!). They told me the gun was originally from the Texas Department of Corrections and I still have it in my closet at home. — GEORGE BROUSSARD

For a while, we debated if the pistol should have a scope on it or other tech parts and things like that. Eventually we ended up just getting rid of all that stuff and just making a nice solid huge Desert Eagle that we later replaced with the 1911 Pistol. — ALLEN BLUM III, Duke Legacy Designer, Triptych Games
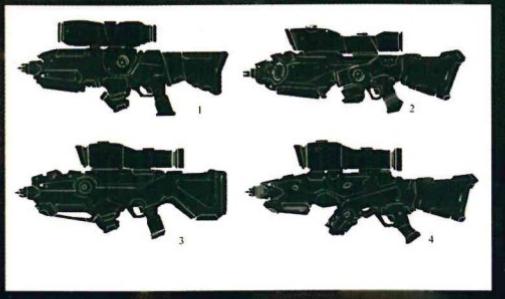
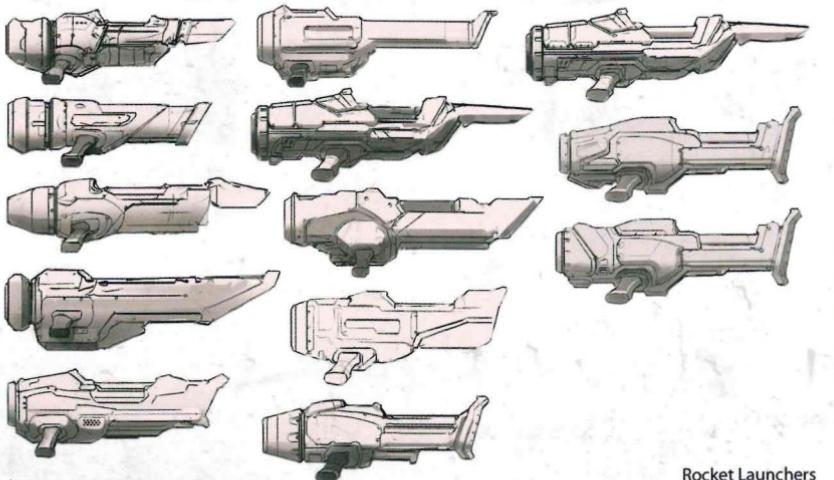We added the railgun later in production because we finally started making larger outdoor areas and it called for a longer distance weapon. — GEORGE BROUSSARD

This used to be an M16, but at some point we decided to redo Duke 3D weapons and get those solidified as full 3D renders , and the machine gun eventually came back to looking like Duke 3D's Ripper. — ALLEN BLUM III

We tried a whole bunch of different concepts for the Rocket Launcher and in the end people found that they liked the original Duke 3D design best. — DAVID RIEGEL

Rocket Launchers
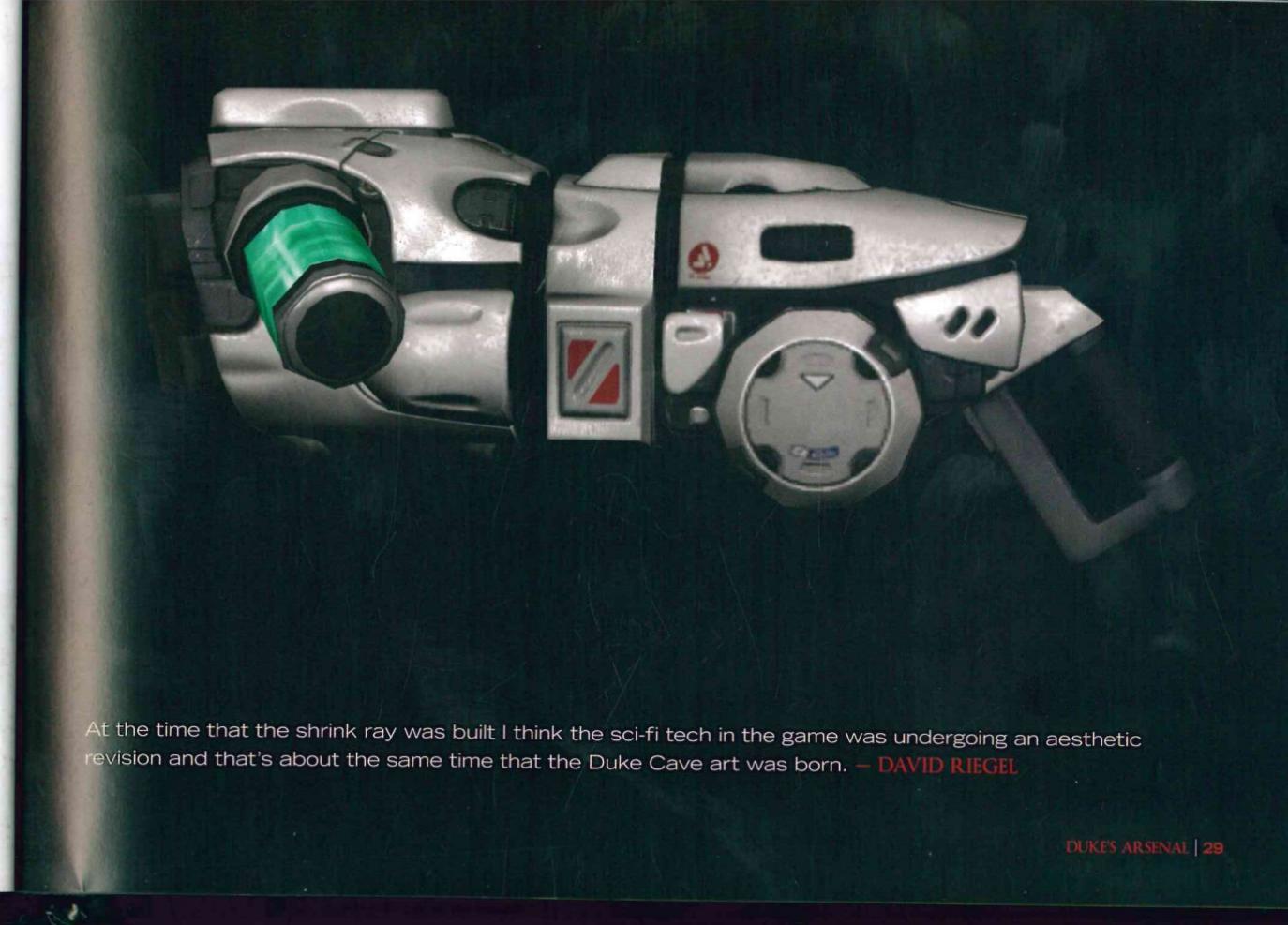
At the time that the shrink ray was built I think the sci-fi tech in the game was undergoing an aesthetic revision and that's about the same time that the Duke Cave art was born. — DAVID RIEGEL

CHAPTER 3 ALIENS

PIGCOP
SWAT CAPTAIN

A very early Pigcop sketch from the 90s

A reworking of the Pigcop was one of the first things that I saw when I came to interview at 3D Realms. The thing that struck me immediately was that they weren't cartoony at all, they were this big sc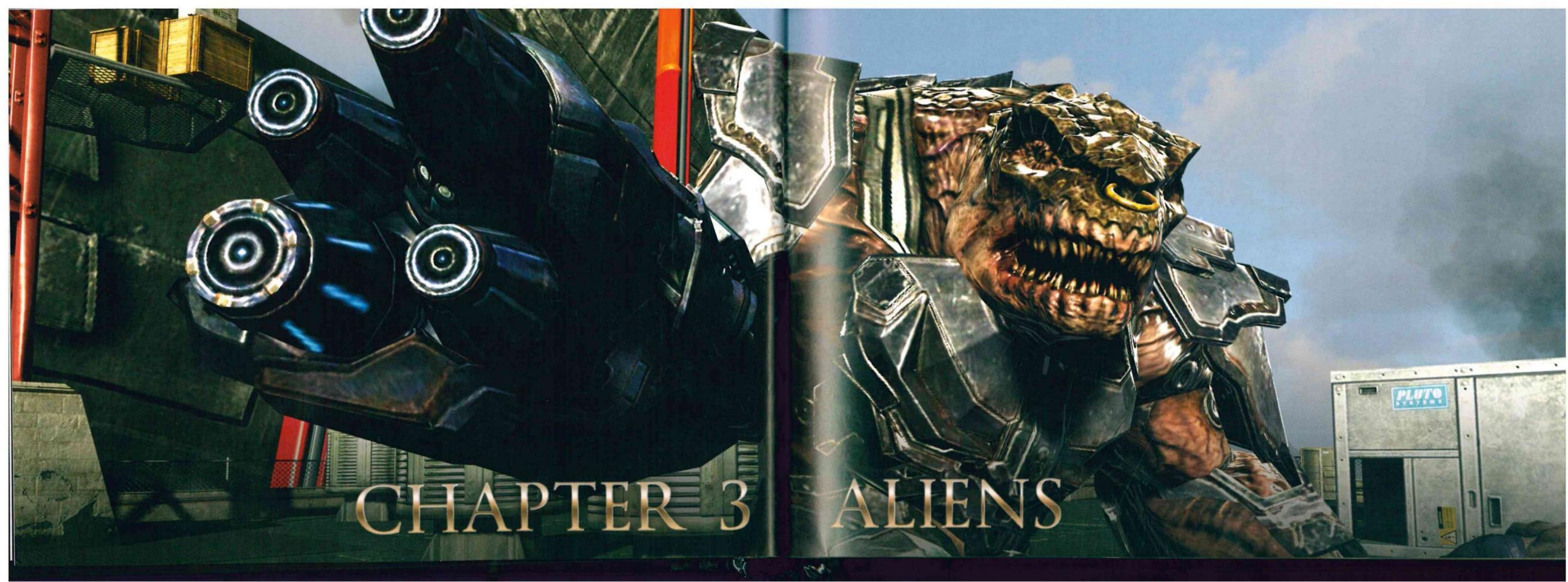ary monster and I think that was one thing I didn't expect. We went in that direction a little too far at one point. They were really completely bloodied up and completely mangled and had ripped skin and everybody thought it was just too far, a little too over the top, so we pulled that back and the final design ended up menacing but I think more reasonable in terms of its presentation. — DAVID RIEGEL
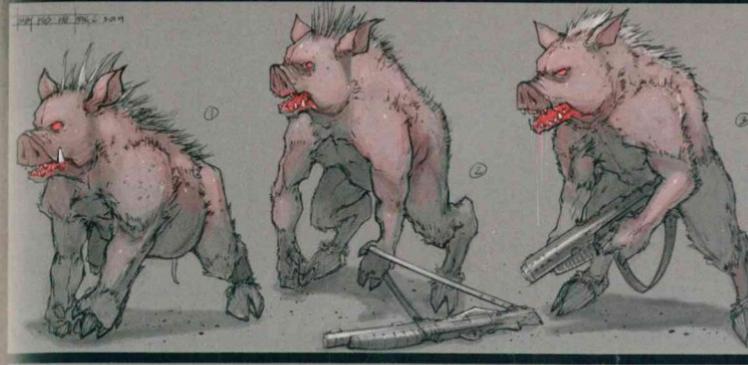
The Pigcop runts—runts in terms of being half sized and developed—got cut due to time. They were intended to be comical and similar to the Halo grunts. — GEORGE BROUSSARD
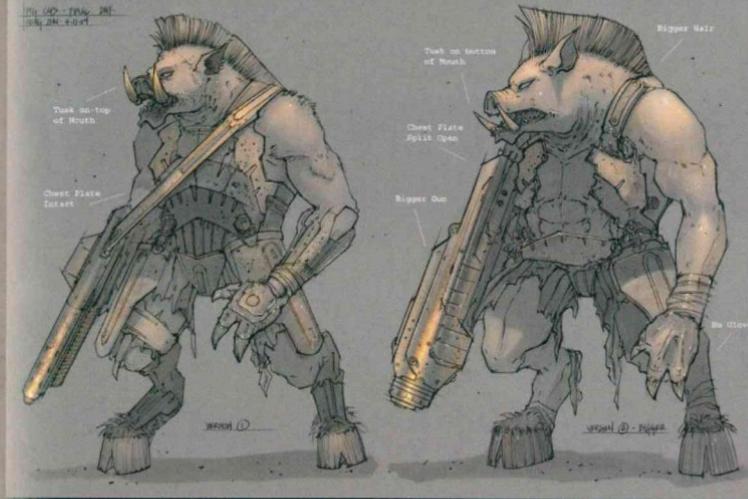
We had a ton of Pigcops. If there was one character that was consistently implemented throughout development, it was the Pigcops. It was surprising how many conceptual designs were created during the creation of DNF—from serious, bloodthirsty monsters to more tongue-in-cheek parody beasts. Everyone had all sorts of ideas for them—we entertained a lot of them. — BRIAN COZZENS
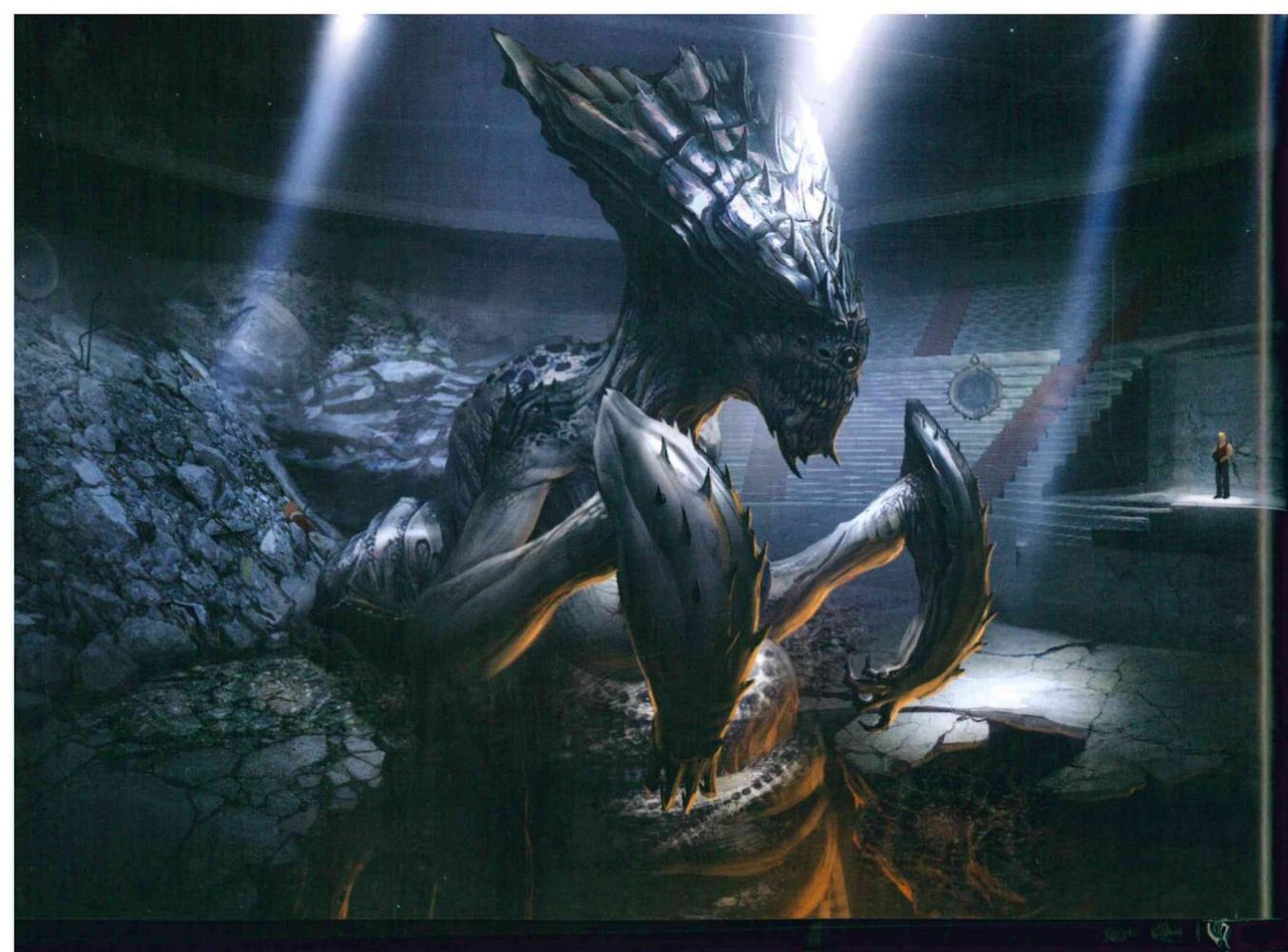
At one point the Alien Queen was going to have three stages of health, and at every stage one of her boobs would deflate. — DAVID RIEGEL
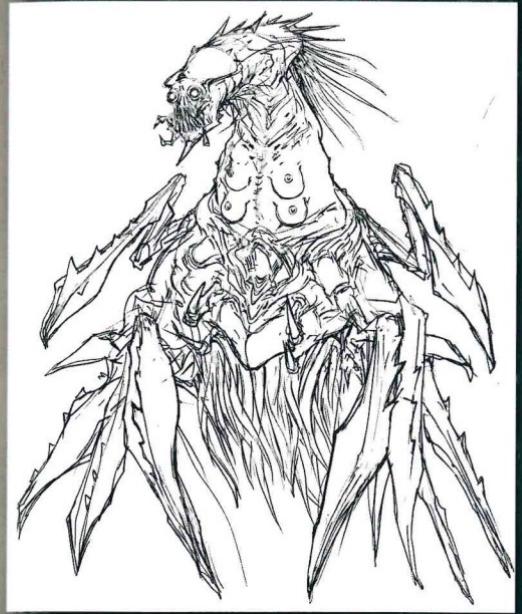
Dozens of sketches were mocked up for the Alien Queen - many different iterations were done to perfect her face.

He needs to mutate people. We were going to have this be via eye lasers. I think it would be better to chop off his right arm halfway down the forearm and graft on some type of mechanical device and he would shoot that like a gun. It would also serve to make him less human looking.
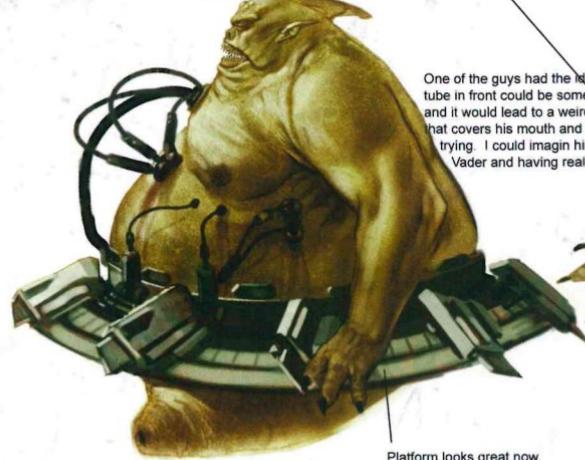
One of the guys had the idea that maybe that large tube in front could be some kind of breathing device and it would lead to a weird looking mask of sorts that covers his mouth and nose. May be worth trying. I could imagin him sounding like Darth Vader and having real labored breathing.

Face still isn't scary. The side profile looks ok. Eyes squinting hurts it i think. Not sure what comments to make other than to try to make the head/face look scarier. Coments that it was still a little too human.

Side profile is pretty good. Comments that the front looked 'jolly' and nor scary. I love the deck and the wires though. Great!

Platform looks great now.

I'm thinking the guy may be a little too fat/wide. We don't want him to be so wide that we can't get him around in the game. You can probably cheat and scale him thinner, but also taking some bulk off his sides may be a good idea.

Like to see an anus shape more like this. Just less bulk under

The Assault Commander was one of the first few characters that we created when we had just implemented the deferred lighting version of our engine. This utilized real-time lights and normal map data produced some really spectacular visual results for the time. – BRIAN COZZENS

The Assault Commander's blades are a result of Joe Wampole's iterative design. He thought maybe those blades could have been a lot bigger and have some sort of gameplay element. They kept getting bigger and wider and eventually the Assault Commander ended up being able to actually hit you with those blades. – CHRIS DeSIMONE

A render of an Enforcer

The Cycloid Emperor in all his glory.

One of the very first things Layne Johnson did at 3D Realms was a new take on the Cycloid Emperor that ended directing the way the rest of the aliens look, especially in the head and face. — ANDREW KERSCHNER, Artist, Triptych Games

The Liz Troopers came in two varieties in Duke 3D and evolved into what later became the Assault Trooper and Assault Captain in Duke Nukem Forever. — DAVID RIEGEL

The Assault Trooper Captain's armor kept the sci-fi theme, but made the design much more sharp and contemporary versus the original art that was done for Duke 3D. — BRIAN COZZENS
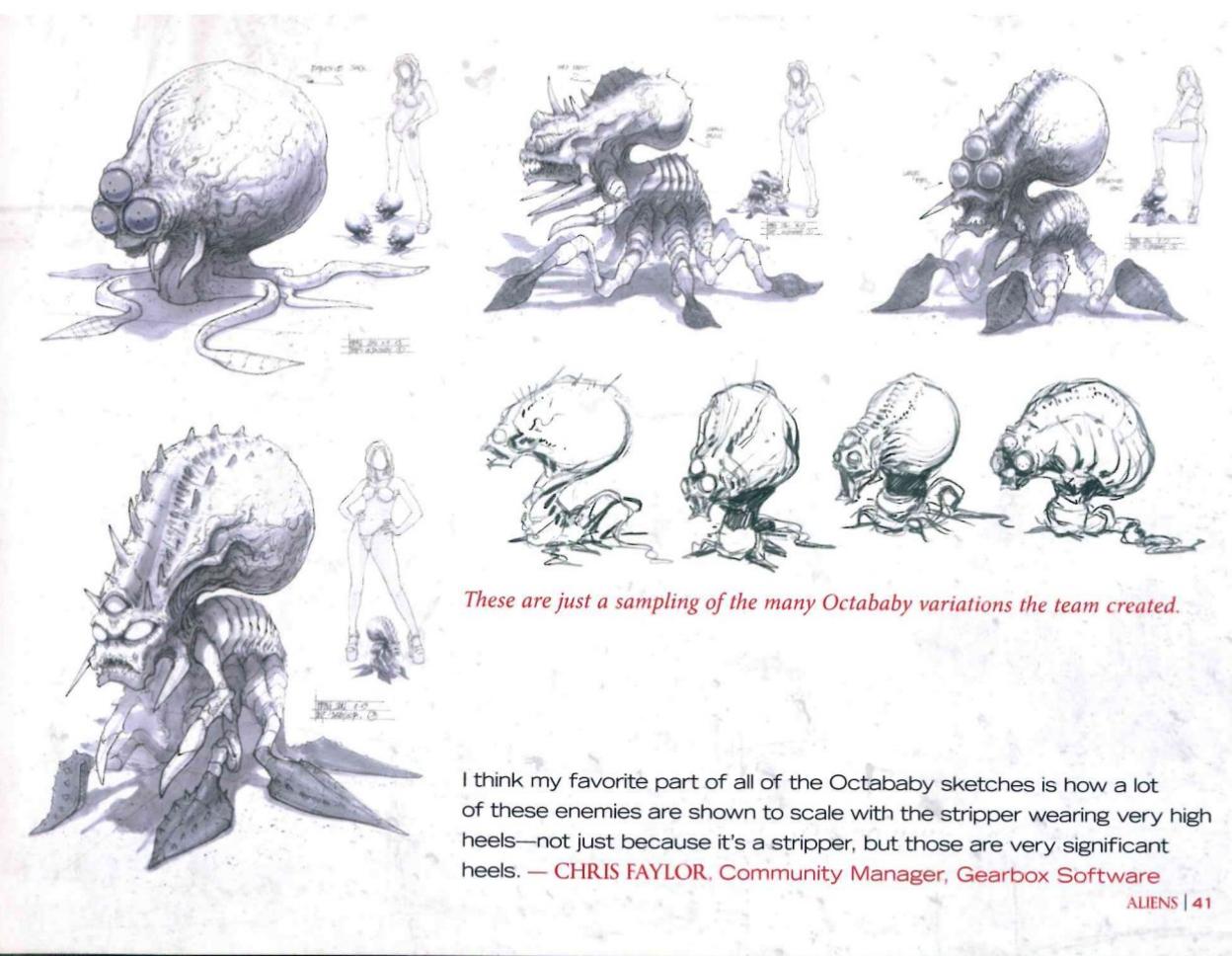
These are just a sampling of the many Octababy variations the team created.

I think my favorite part of all of the Octababy sketches is how a lot of these enemies are shown to scale with the stripper wearing very high heels—not just because it's a stripper, but those are very significant heels. — CHRIS FAYLOR, Community Manager, Gearbox Software
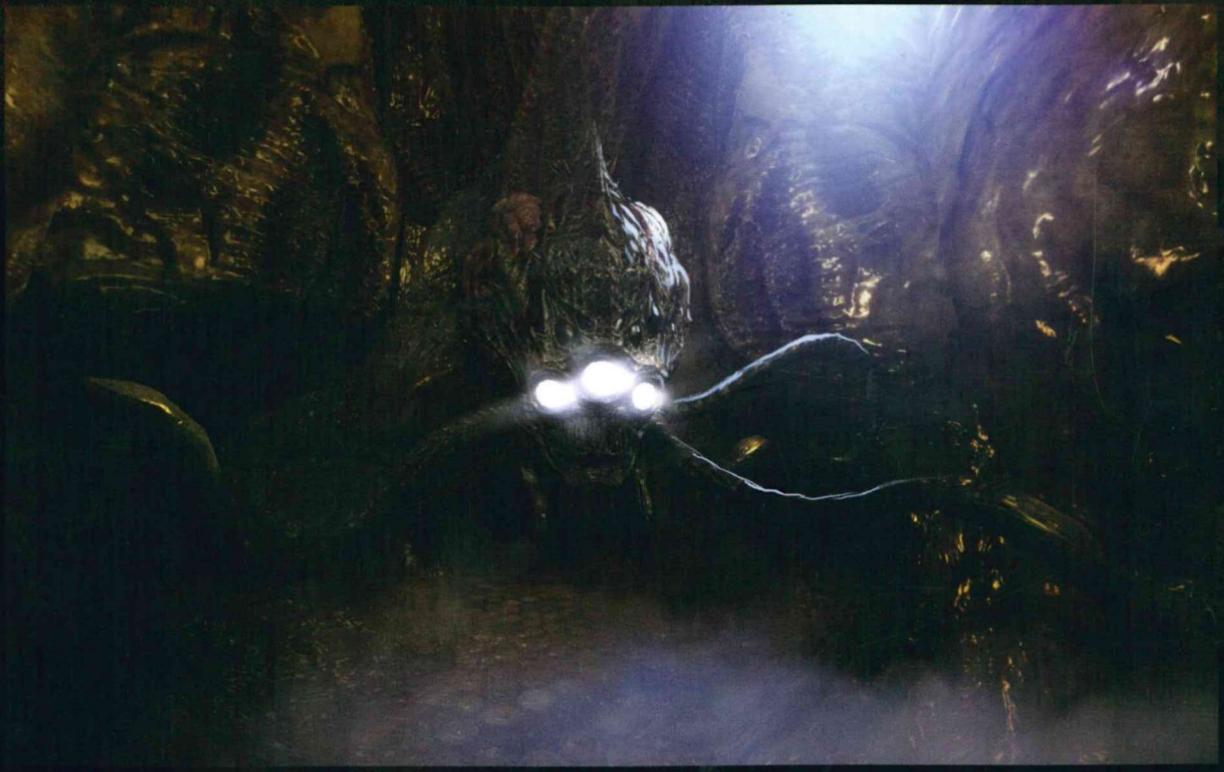
A painted screenshot of the Octabrain in Duke Nukem Forever.

The Octaking.
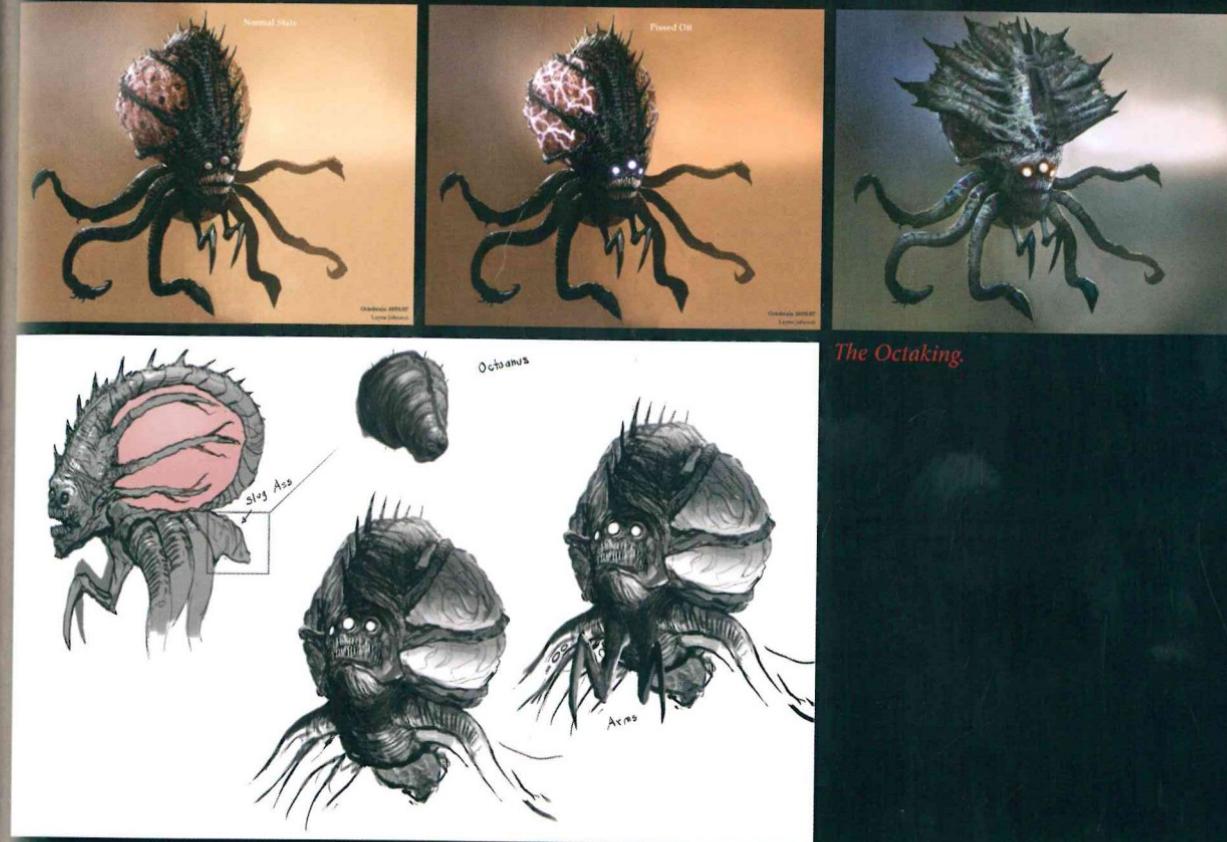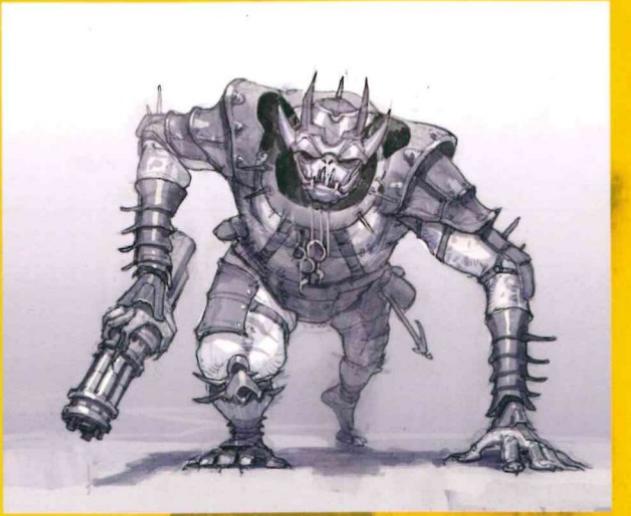
He's as tall as a building and prancing around in a little diaper there. So what do you do? You go up and hit him in the nuts. — ALLEN BLUM III
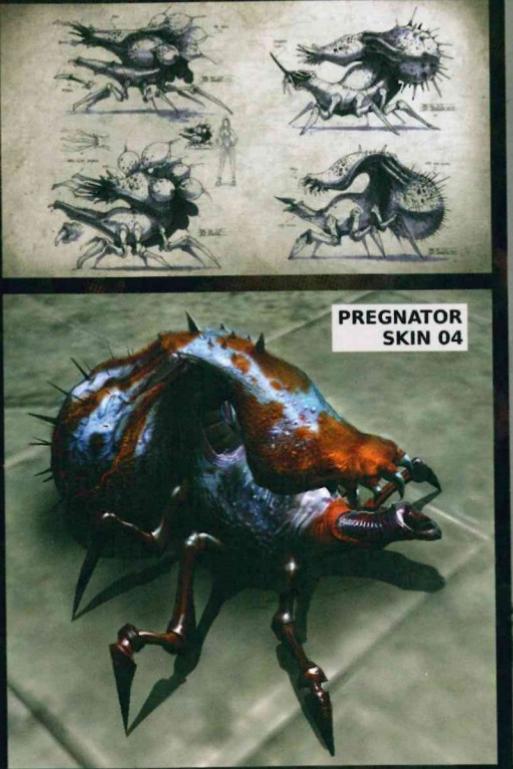
PREGNATOR
SKIN 04

As I recall, the Impregnator was sort of controversial in the beginning. I know that John Anderson was really against this, because it's... it's a dick running around. — STEPHEN COLE, Visual Designer, Gearbox Software
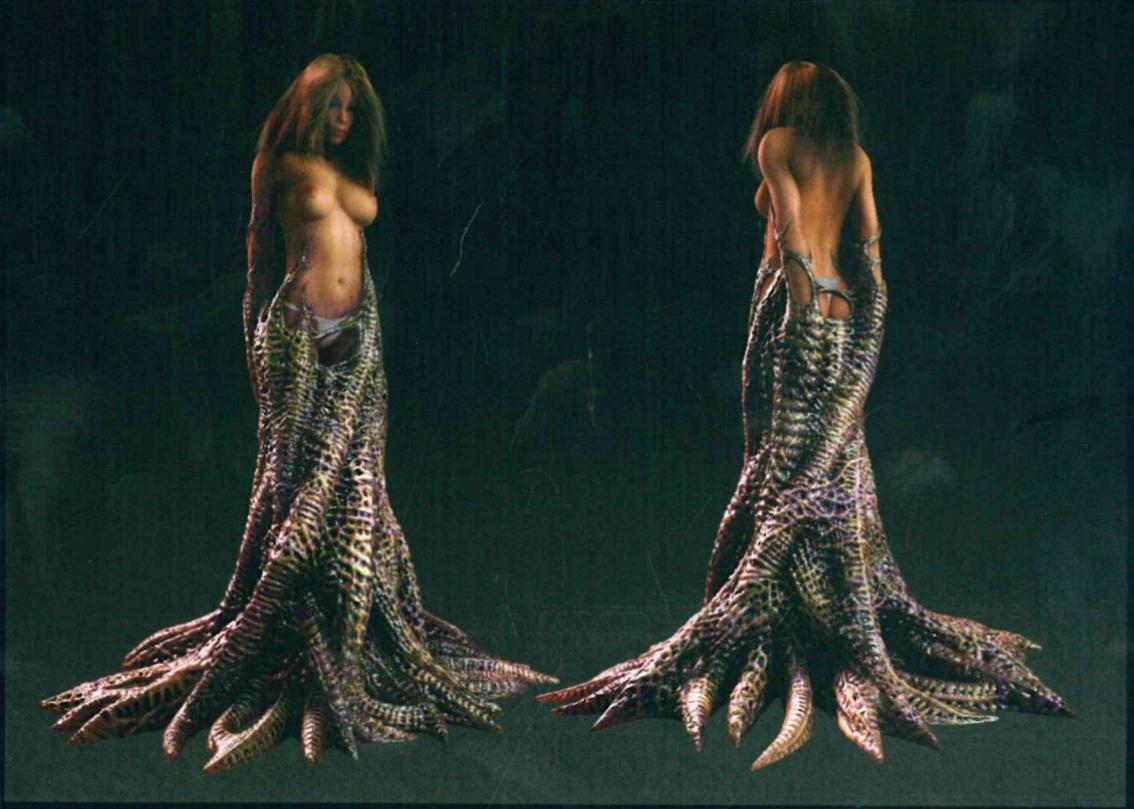
Podgirls - as seen in the Alien Hive.

CHAPTER 4   FRIENDS OF DUKE

How could we begin this chapter with anything but the babes of Duke?

The Babes went through multiple iterations and costume designs. I tried to avoid any one girl showing more skin than another and strived for an equality of sexiness and beauty without compromising their individuality.
— DENNIS DEKONING, Art Director at Piranha Games
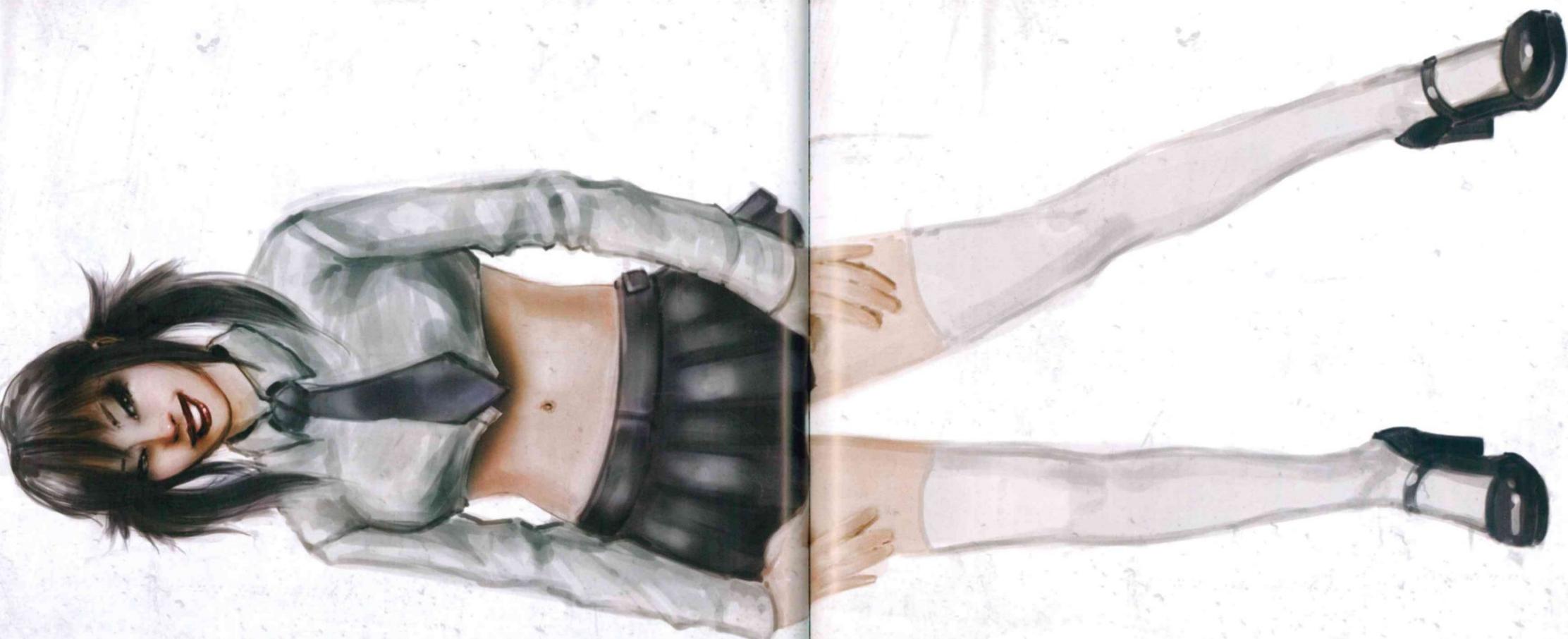
The theme I was going for in designing the babes was the stereotypical fantasy girl which had to capture appearance, attitude, movements and vocalizations. She had to have accentuated but believable proportions that flattered her particular fantasy type. — DENNIS DEKONING

A render of one of the strippers in Duke Nukem Forever.

The Holsom Twins were to be Christian Rock singers.
The Christian Rock singer part is just social satire.
— GEORGE BROUSSARD

Not every babe will necessarily be someone's fantasy girl, but
hopefully at least one (or more) will fit their groove.
— DENNIS DEKONING

"DUKE, I LIKE YOU! YOU REMIND ME OF MYSELF WHEN I WAS YER AGE. HELL, WHEN SOMEONE WOULD GET IN MY WAY I'D SHOOT 'EM STRAIGHT TO KINGDOM COME..... STILL IS THE BEST WAY TO SOLVE A PROBLEM!"

"THE GENERAL"
DAN PANOSIAN
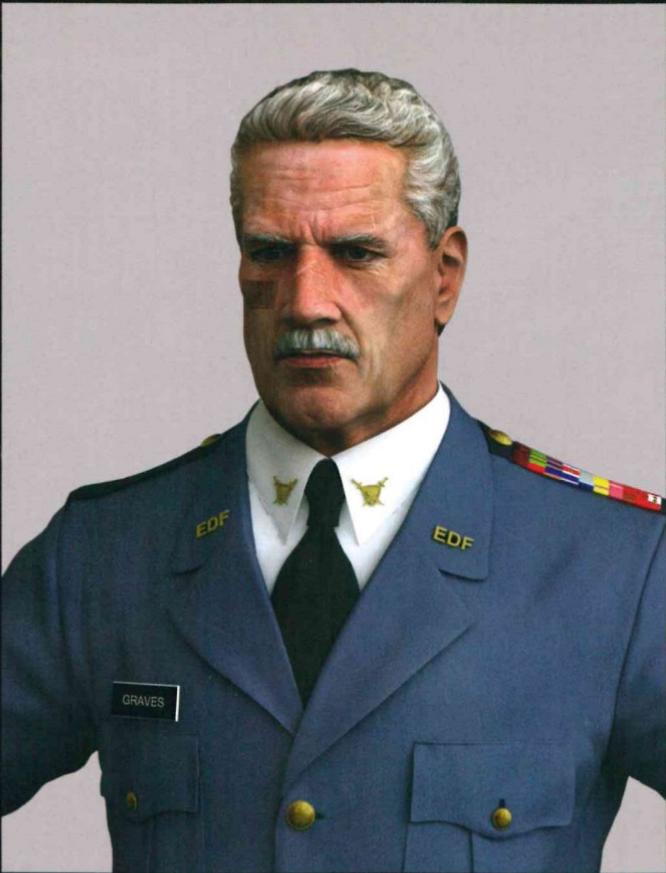
General Graves did have a first name – it was Phil. There's a factoid for you.
— JOE SIEGLER. Duke Nukem Community Manager, Gearbox Software

Phil Graves came from Tom Hall as he made a pun as to what Graves' first name would be. Tom said something like, "He's a military guy— he fills graves! Get it?" — GEORGE BROUSSARD

In one version of Duke Nukem Forever, you ran into an old miner named Gus who let you take his mule for a ride towards Vegas. While on the mule, you fought enemy aircraft and such. It was a slow level, in terms of progression, and eventually went away. — ALLEN BLUM III

"GUS & MULE"
DAN PANOSIAN

"GUS"
DAN PANOSIAN

GOLD MINING SURE IS HARD WORK - BUT I SPOSE WHACK'N ALIENS AIN'T NO WALK IN THE PARK EITHER!!
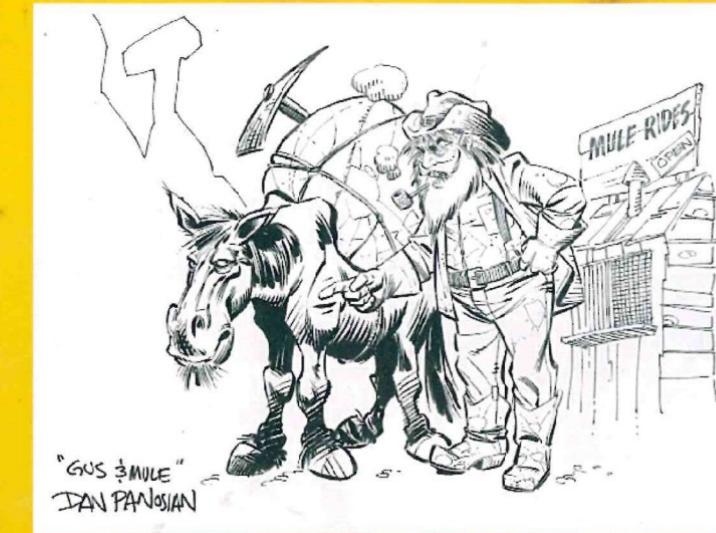
That's the evolution of game design, mule to monster truck. — DAVID RIEGEL

"SWAT GUY"
STANDARD

DAN PANOSIAN

"SWAT TEAM"
(GOOD GUY)

DAN PANOSIAN
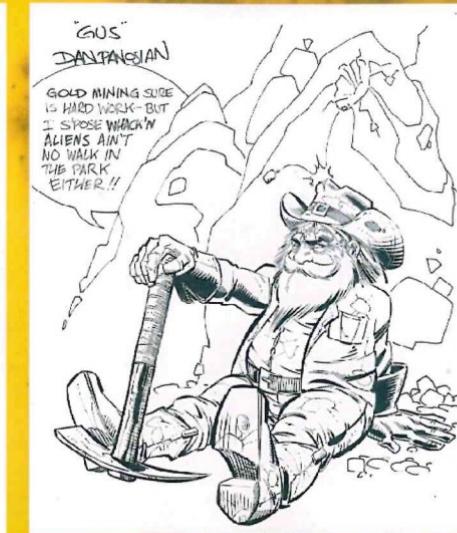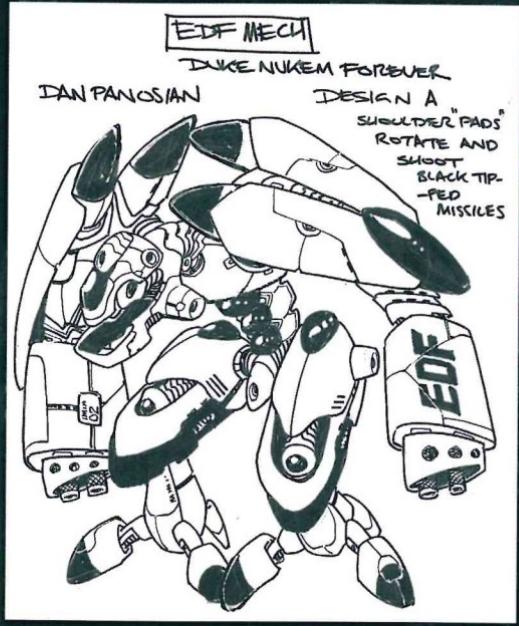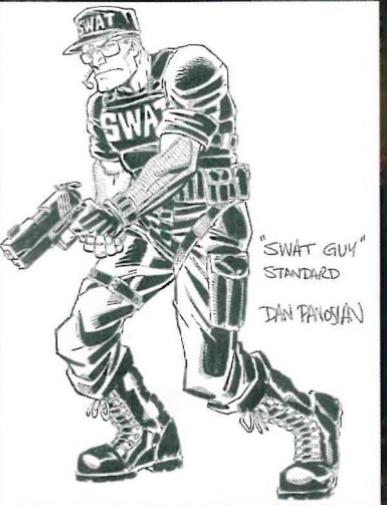
These are some early concepts of the Earth Defense Force from the 90s.

SWAT
DOG

FRONT OF
ATTACK DOG
FOR AIR FORCE
BASE.
COLOR: DK BLUE/WHITE LETTERS

DAN PANOSIAN

U.S.
K9
TEAM

FRONT OF
ATTACK DOG
FOR S.W.A.T.
TEAM.

COLOR:
BLACK/RED

K9

DOG IS A CROSS
BETWEEN A BASIC
GERMAN SHEPPARD
WITH A LITTLE
WOLF THROWN IN
TO ADD A FERAL
TOUCH. THIS IS A
"DUKE" WORLD - SO
THE DOGS SHOULD
APPEAR A BIT MORE
SAVAGE. BRISTLING
HAIR ON BACK OF
NECK, ETC.

EDF MECH

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

DAN PANOSIAN

DESIGN A
"SHOULDER PADS"
ROTATE AND
SHOOT
BLACK TIP-
PED
MISSILES

EDF

"MUTANT RIOT SQUAD"
-EXPOSED (GREEN) BRAIN
-BLOODY RIOT SHIELD
-COMBAT HELMET
& BOOTS

DAN
PANOSIAN

"MUTANT SWAT TEAM"
-EXPOSED VEINED/MUSCULAR
ARMS.
-CLAW-LIKE HANDS
-SHAGGY/UNKEMPT HAIR
-MUTATED FACE
-GREENISH SKIN COLOR

DAN PANOSIAN

The EDF have come full circle. Originally, they were supposed to be more like an Earth police force, and then at one point in time, it was decided that they needed to be modernized and so we went with the more sci-fi kind of look that was very techy. Then, when we needed to get a final version of the game, we wanted to go back to the original kind of federal police SWAT. — DAVID RIEGEL
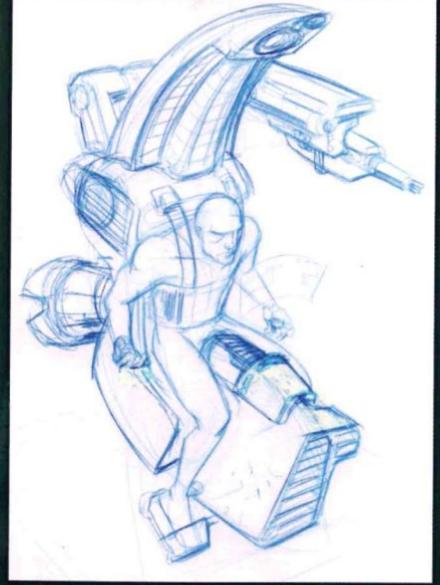
Dr. Proton was meant to return originally in DNF, but he was removed shortly after when we switched to the Unreal engine. Now all he has left in the current incarnation is a casino in Vegas next to Duke's Lady Killer... It's the first to get destroyed when the aliens attack. — BRIAN COZZENS
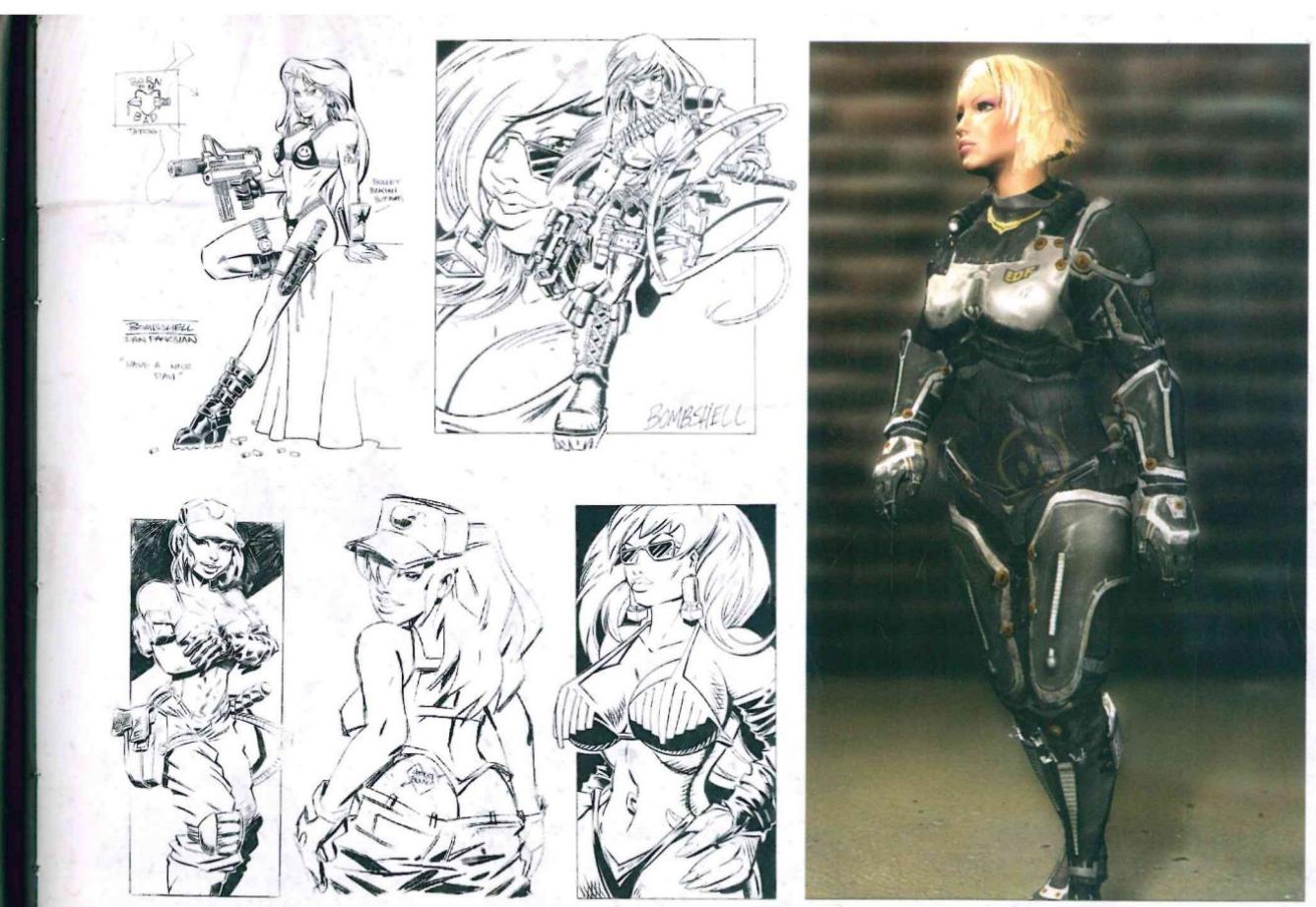
Bombshell actually was originally going to be in her own game. The idea was if you could think of a female counterpart to Duke, Bombshell was it. At Gearbox, we actually put some work into Bombshell's back story here a few years ago. And long before that there was a time when George thought he should introduce her to Duke... In fact you can see Bombshell in the Duke Nukem Forever trailer from '97 I think—the version of the game running on the Quake engine. There's a shot in that trailer where there's a female character; very stiff animation with her arm out with a gun in her hand. A lot of people didn't know who that was: it was Bombshell. — RANDY PITCHFORD
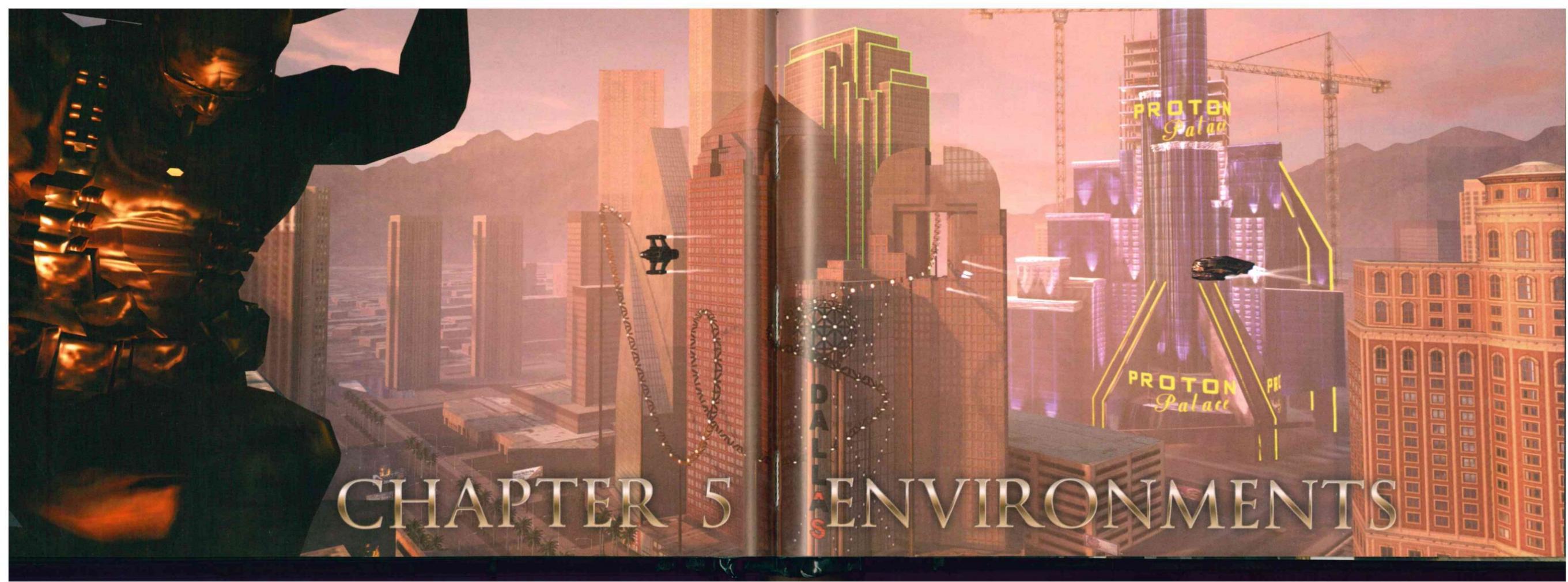
CHAPTER 5 ENVIRONMENTS

Various concepts, renders, and sketches of Duke's casino in Vegas.

I had architecture experience and could design spaces pretty quickly, so I was brought on to redesign some of the key spaces in the game and set more realistic scales. I'd spend a couple of days concepting, modeling and rendering out a space, then we'd run around in-game it to see if it looked right. Then we'd go back and forth with the designers. I think there was some conflict at the beginning, just because I wanted it to look cool when they wanted it to run well. Coming from an architecture background into video games, there was a whole new set of challenges. — ANDREW KERSCHNER
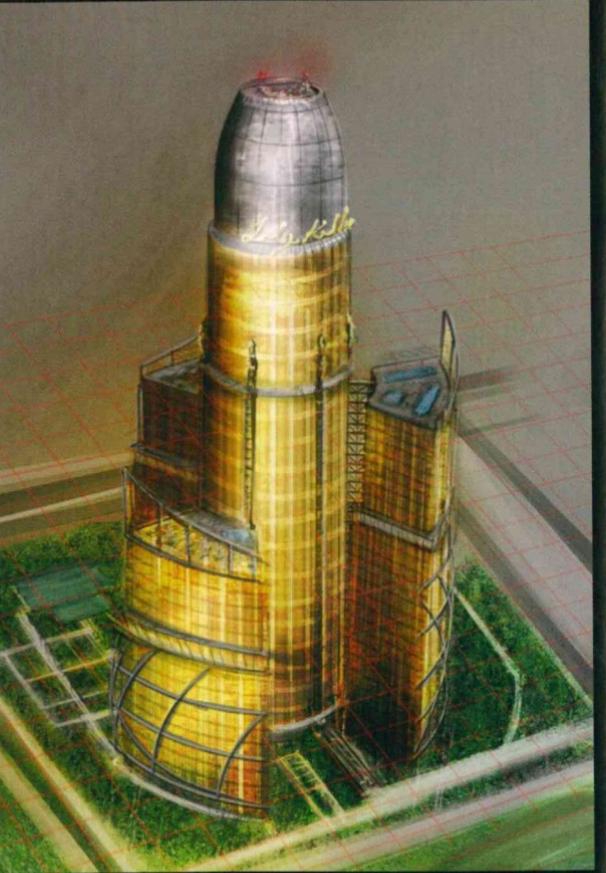
An overview of the casino in multiplayer.

There are probably close to 100 people working on the game now, so it's still a massive undertaking. When you get source code and source content without the environment that it was built in and without the understanding of how it was made, you are basically just looking at a bunch of snapshots and it's very complicated to pick up snapshots and try to arrange them into a film. Now, multiply that complexity times a billion – because we're talking about software and source code here. I don't think I can articulate how valuable institutional knowledge is with our craft —the guys from 3DRealms who are part of the project today—this game never would've happened without their commitment. — RANDY PITCHFORD

The Hollywood Holocaust sign was recreated several times throughout the life of DNF—perhaps more so than other assets that came and went as Las Vegas morphed with each iteration of the game.

The Lake Mead map
was the first area we
created that required the
introduction of alien craft.
The really old designs for
these were inspired by
the alien ships that were
seen in Independence Day.
We didn't really have any
other need for them until
the top of the Lady Killer
Casino— which also required
us creating a mothership
to accompany the smaller
craft. Their use has become
much, much more involved
since those days.
— BRIAN COZZENS
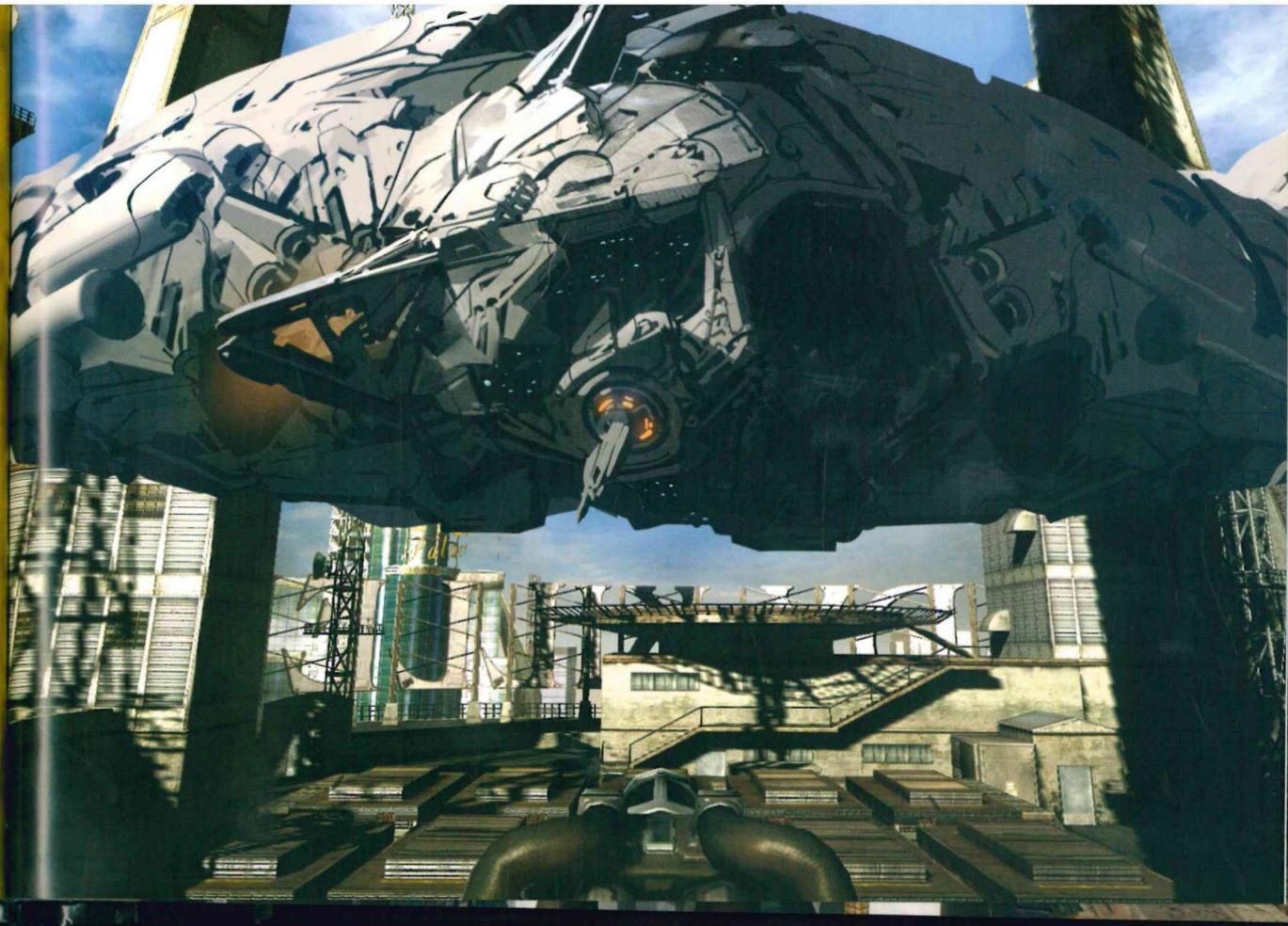
An overhead view of the multiplayer map MorningWood – also called the Ghost Town.
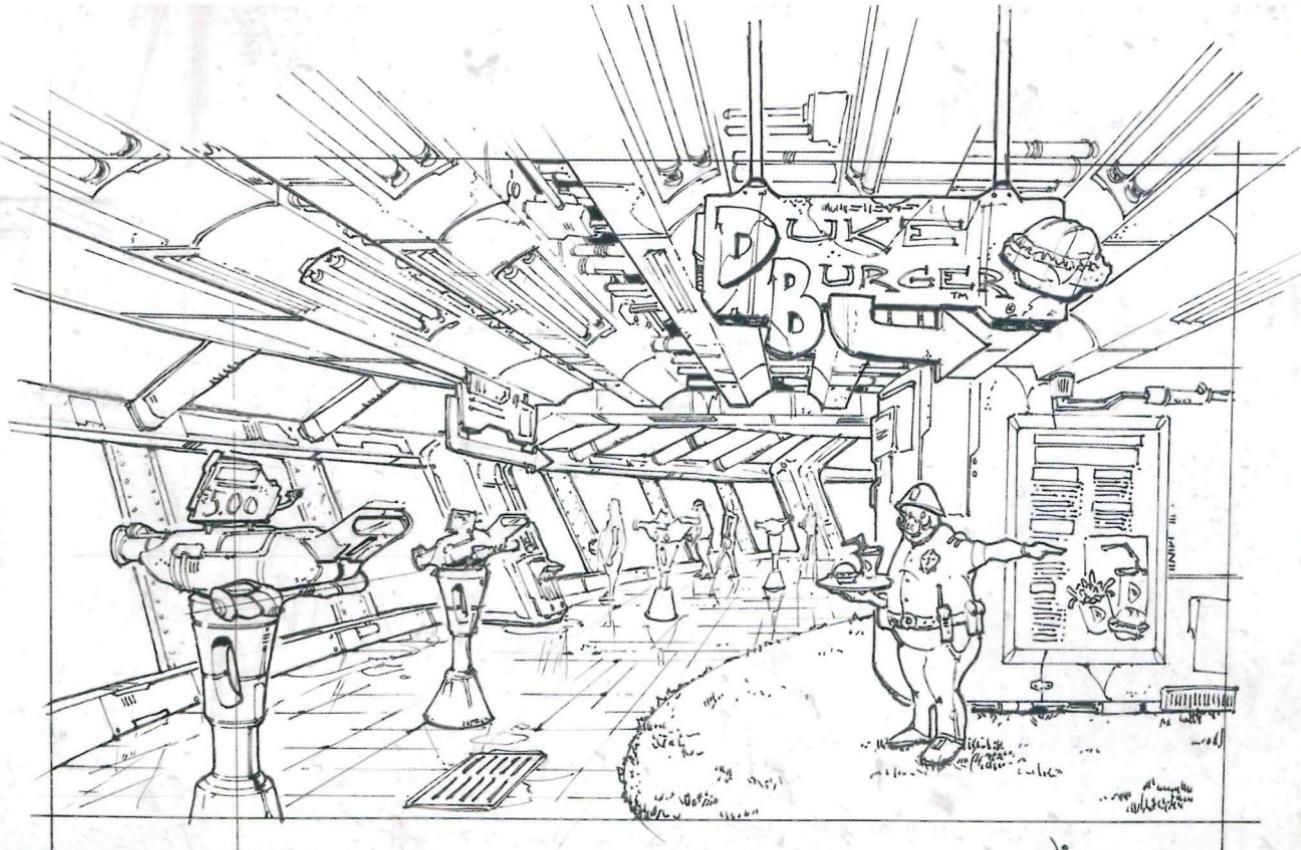
A Duke Burger Concept dating back to 2005.

9·3·05
DUKE NUKEM
FOREVER
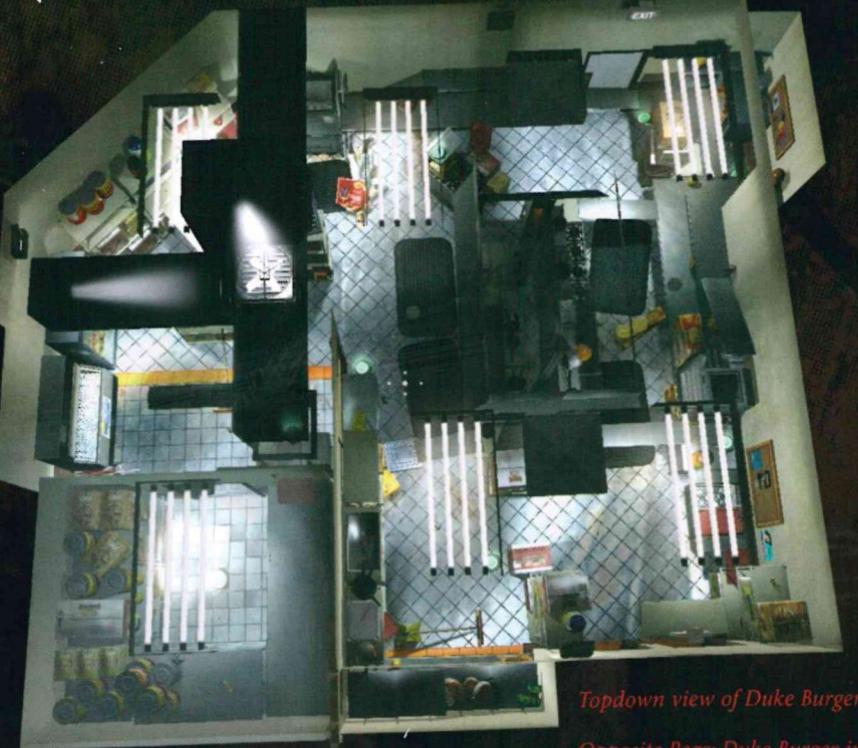
Topdown view of Duke Burger interior.

Opposite Page: Duke Burger infested by the aliens.
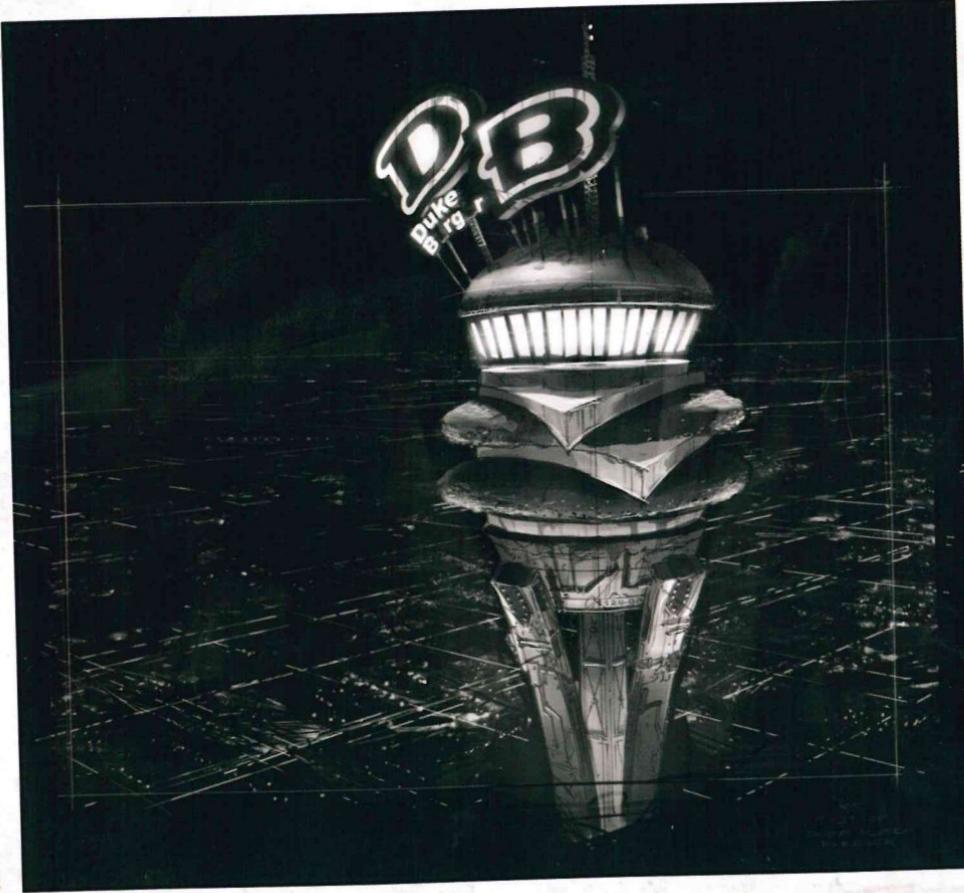
*An older design for
Duke Burger.*

There was an amateur level designer that entered a contest back when we were working on the Atomic Edition of Duke. He built the Hoover Dam in Build, and Allen said "that's fucking awesome." I can't know for sure, but I think that might have planted a seed for all the Hoover Dam stuff that's in DNF. — RANDY PITCHFORD

As I recall the Hoover Dam area was the main catalyst for us switching to the Unreal Engine. We saw the Unreal beta and it looked fantastic. The big attractor for us was that it could render these large outdoor spaces without killing the frame rate. This ended up being the big motivator for us switching from the Quake 2 engine to Unreal—which some might say was the beginning of the curse. If it wasn't for Hoover Dam, we would have probably stuck with the Quake 2 engine. — BRIAN COZZENS
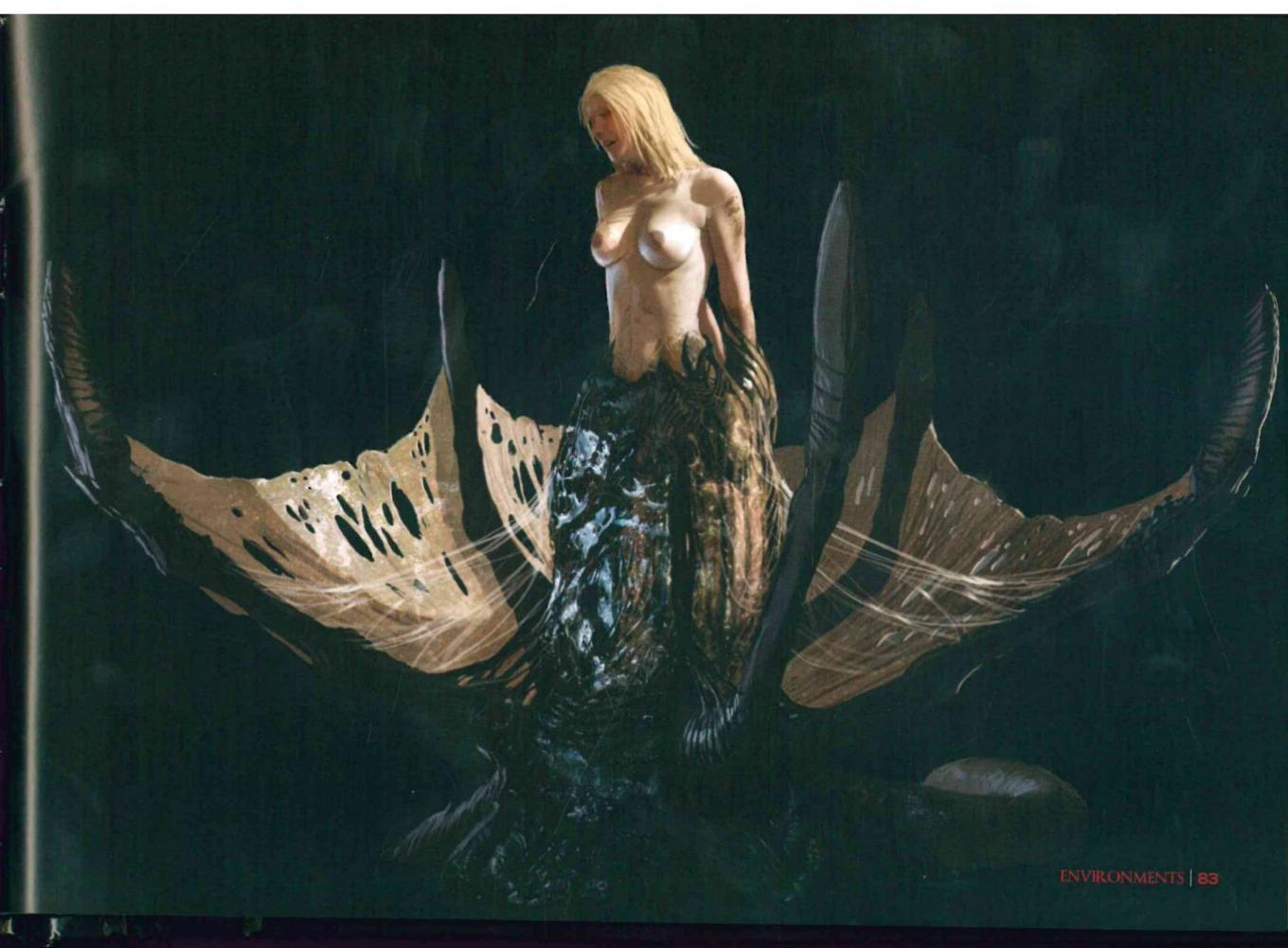
We worked with the Quake 1 engine for a long time, until we had a limit, it was a brush limit. We could not physically add any more brushes to the map—it wouldn't compile. I then shot over an email to Tim Willits at id (Software) for clarification regarding the compile error. Tim responded with the solution to the error and ended the email with "stop being so creative." And that was when we realized we weren't going to be able to make the game that we wanted to make—Quake just couldn't make the Duke Nukem level we wanted by any stretch of the imagination. — STEPHEN COLE

A painted screenshot of the alien hive. The team explored many different vistas and ways to reveal the landscape of this area.

As for intent, this is a 3D Realms game. This is the vision that those guys had and they deserve all the credit for it. So it's a tough thing for me right now to talk about the responsibility for the game coming out—of course I respect all the Gearbox talent and all the people that got involved at other studios that have helped so that we can actually play it—these guys on the team are killing themselves. But at the same time, I don't want to risk taking anything away from not just the guys who didn't give up—the 30 or so guys that brought the game from 2007 to 2009 and the countless other people who have been involved since the very beginning. They all had influence. I don't want to take anything away from any of that. So I have to be very careful—I don't want to disrespect the huge commitment people made back then as well as what's happening right now so we can actually, finally, play the game. It's a huge effort and everyone who has ever been involved from the very beginning to the very last check in before certification and release to manufacturing has had a role in how it got to where it is today in the gamers' hands. — RANDY PITCHFORD

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